

Together for Kids and Families Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS)

The Leadership Team authored the following vision statement: *“Together for Kids and Families envisions safe and supportive communities where all children and their families are a top priority. Together for Kids and Families envisions a high quality, well-funded system of early childhood family services and supports. Families, communities, schools, service providers and policy makers are committed and accountable for helping families and children succeed”.*

Eight work groups have been meeting on a regular basis since March of 2004, five assigned to the key component areas of the grant: 1) medical home; 2) mental health; 3) early care and education; 4) parent education; and 5) family support and three addressing the cross-cutting issues of data, policy alignment and sustainability and family involvement. Outcomes, strategies, action steps and indicators to measure progress have been recommended by the work groups and reviewed/edited by the Leadership Team.

The following draft items are still being refined as we move towards integration with a systems focus amongst the topic areas.

EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Early care and education in Nebraska is high quality, developmentally appropriate and accessible to all children.

Strategies:

- Utilize a voluntary quality rating system for early childhood care and education programs.
- Expand the Nebraska State Early Childhood Education grant programs to all public school systems and Educational Service Units in partnership with community programs and services.
- Develop quality incentive program for license-exempt providers.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Nebraska families provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Strategies:

- Advocate for the acceleration of the statewide 2-1-1 system.
- Develop and promote a community based structure in Nebraska to identify and address barriers to service accessibility.
- Integrate parent-parent support systems into existing and new programs and services for families.
- Further development of respite services to meet the needs of all parents

PARENT EDUCATION

Nebraska parents support their children's healthy development.

Strategies:

- Implement a statewide system for providing parenting information to families in a variety of formats.
- Implement universal home visitation for all families of newborns.
- Better prepare all Nebraskans for the important role of parenting by making a parenting course mandatory for all high school students.

MEDICAL HOME

All Nebraska children have access to and receive high quality health care services through a medical home.

Strategies:

- Develop and implement a collaborative initiative to promote the medical home concept as a standard of care for all children.
- Identify and replicate effective safety net programs (for increasing access for uninsured, underinsured and uninsurable children).
- Increase access by expanding the scope of practice for dental hygienists and assistants, as well as other health care professionals.
- Establish a comprehensive program to promote regular, recommended pediatric visits for children eligible for EPSDT. Program to include outreach and information to both providers and families.

MENTAL HEALTH

The early childhood mental health (social-emotional-behavioral health) needs of Nebraska's children are met.

Strategies:

- Expand the Nebraska Telehealth system to include early childhood mental health as a vehicle for connecting with others, training and service delivery.
- Sustain, replicate, and build upon changes made in the Early Childhood Mental Health Systems that better meet the needs of families and children in Nebraska.
- Integrate adult and child mental health practice to address maternal depression and early childhood. (Recognize the reciprocity of parent/child interaction).

DATA

The data group has been developing a core set of early childhood indicators to measure progress towards the desired goals. The data group plans to recommend a strategy to address the lack of data available regarding children prior to Kindergarten.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The Family Involvement work group developed and distributed a parent opinion survey to gather information from parents across the state to ensure parents have a voice in the planning process. Parent responses have been reviewed and considered throughout the planning process and will be cited in the final report.

POLICY ALIGNMENT

In September 2004, the Policy Alignment Work Group completed a document summarizing how funds are currently used in the Early Childhood system in Nebraska. The group has also been reviewing the products of the five topic work groups and advising regarding policy issues.

4/11/05